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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

DATA COLLECTION FOR RECREATION AND HUMAN SERVICE PROGRAM PLANNING

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN

FAMILY STUDIES

IN THE

FACULTY OF HOME ECONOMICS

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1978

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Methods of Obtaining Information for Recreation Program Planning" submitted by Norma-Jean Heine in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

Supervisor

Date August 20, 1978

ABSTRACT

Recreation is a relatively new discipline in the human service field designed to respond to individual and group leisure needs. In order to respond to these needs and provide sound recreational programming, recreation professionals need to have a thorough understanding of the community in which they are working.

This thesis addresses two major questions. First, what facts about a community are necessary to effectively conduct recreation programs in it? Second, once these facts are known, which method of data collection is most appropriate for recreation programmers for gathering the information?

In response to the first concern, the researcher examined the existing literature and probed personal experience in order to develop a list of thirteen major factors necessary to understanding communities. These factors included: geographical description, population, history, economic structure, local government, organizational density, housing and property, education, recreation and leisure, health, religion, other services, communications. These thirteen factors were considered to be the major headings necessary for understanding a community in order to plan for recreation programming and development. It was felt that these major headings supplemented by the individual entries under each major factor provided a comprehensive picture of each community. In order to facilitate recording the data and using it, data recording sheets were developed on which to place the information as it was collected.

Second, three methods of collecting this key data--key informants, observation, and secondary sources were tested by three unbiased

research assistants in order to determine which method seemed most appropriate for recreation programmers. Each research assistant was assigned one of the three methods and each used this method in three Alberta communities--Morinville, Devon and Stony Plain. Data collected was recorded in data coding booklets. These booklets were then examined by four professional recreation programmers and the writer, and scored according to three variables--quality, quantity, and degree of difficulty in collecting the information.

Results indicate that no one research method is the best for collecting all types of data, however some generalizations can be made as a result of the research. First, key informants seemed to be the best method for collecting large quantities of quality information. Observation was useful for obtaining general information about a community quickly and providing an overall feeling about a community. Secondary sources was useful for providing statistical or demographic data.

The research while serving to answer the initial two concerns, also suggests the need for numerous future studies.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I	STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	1
	Programming in the Human Service Field	2
	Recreation as a Human Service Field	4
	Community Information as a Part of Recreation Program Planning	5
II	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	10
	Defining Community	10
	Community Differences	11
	Community Data and Program Planning	16
	Studying Communities	17
	Indepth Community Studies	17
	Partial Community Studies	19
	Collecting Community Data	20
	Observation	20
	Participant Observation	22
	Questionnaire	23
	Interview	25
	Key Community Informants	26
	Secondary Sources	26
	Summary	28
III	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	29
IV	RESEARCH DESIGN	34
	Rationale for Selection of Community Factors	34
	Selection of the Methods of Data Collection	40
	Selection of Communities	41
	The Researchers	42
	Training Procedures	42
	The Pre-test	44
	Results of the Pre-test	44
	The Data Collection	45

Chapter		Page
	Reporting the Data	45
	Evaluating the Information	46
V	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	49
	Quantity of Information	49
	Degree of Difficulty	51
	Quality of Information	52
	Summary of Results	53
VI	IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS	55
	Implications and Recommendations	55
	Limitations of the Study	57
	Future Directions	58
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	60
	APPENDICES	
	A. Data Coding Booklet	68
	B. Time Table and Instructions to Research Assistants	92

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	A Comparison of Rimrock and Homestead summarized from Vogt and O'Dea	13
2	A Comparison of Community Responses in Rimrock and Homestead summarized from Vogt and O'Dea	15
3	Analysis Sheet	48
4	Completed Analysis Sheet	50

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	3
2	Model for Recreation Program Planning	31

Chapter 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In April, 1978, a public forum was held in Grande Prairie, Alberta on the impact of television on the family. The first evening consisted of an opening address by two well known Alberta media experts. The second day consisted of smaller workshops designed to involve all members of the family in a discussion of a variety of television topics. The forum was well advertised and heavily subsidized by various government departments. In spite of this support, the forum was not rated as highly successful and did not, in fact, generate the enthusiasm and commitment among the public, the organizers had hoped for. While there were a number of factors contributing to the not so successful event, there were two which seemed to stand out. First, by the poor response to many of the workshops, it was obvious that the organizers had not examined the community or its needs closely enough; second, and perhaps even more significant was a remark made by one of the keynote speakers very early in the first evening's program. He elaborated at great length on the lack of cable television in the Grande Prairie area, suggested a community protest and in fact reprimanded the audience for not having proceeded with one sooner. The subject of the entire forum was television, but the guest speaker had not bothered to adequately check out television programming in the Grande Prairie area. Grande Prairie <u>does</u> have cable television and the opening speaker was informed of such in a rather indignant manner. At that point, those attending the forum appeared somewhat "put-out" and displeased with the speaker's lack of knowledge of the Grande Prairie region. As the speech continued, other statements were made

which reiterated this lack of knowledge and understanding.

Programming in the Human Service Field

This example illustrates a problem that can occur when some type of community work is undertaken by a change agent who has not familiarized himself adequately with the community in which he is working. It is one of the most significant problems that can occur in the human service field which as defined by Kieren, Vaines, and Badir (1978, p.18) is "a profession which is organized around co-operative responses to human needs". Individuals and families living in contemporary society have many needs. Maslow (1954) perhaps the most well-known author on human needs, has categorized these needs into five types based on a priority sequence. This hierarchy is reproduced in Figure 1. He suggests that if individuals are being dominated by a physiological need, all their attention will be focused on satisfaction of this need. Until this need is met, the other needs in the hierarchy become increasingly less significant. It is essential therefore, that the lesser important needs are satisfied quickly so that more time can be spent on those needs of greater significance. Maslow suggests for example, that while physical needs are important, the satisfaction of social needs is even more critical. Ackerman (1958) not only concurs with the idea of specific individual and social needs, but suggests that a person selectively seeks out a social environment that is congenial to the expression of these needs. In order to provide this type of environment as well as an empathetic understanding of all aspects of human need, many human service groups have evolved, groups such as health services, education, family life education, recreation and social services. All of these service groups, while

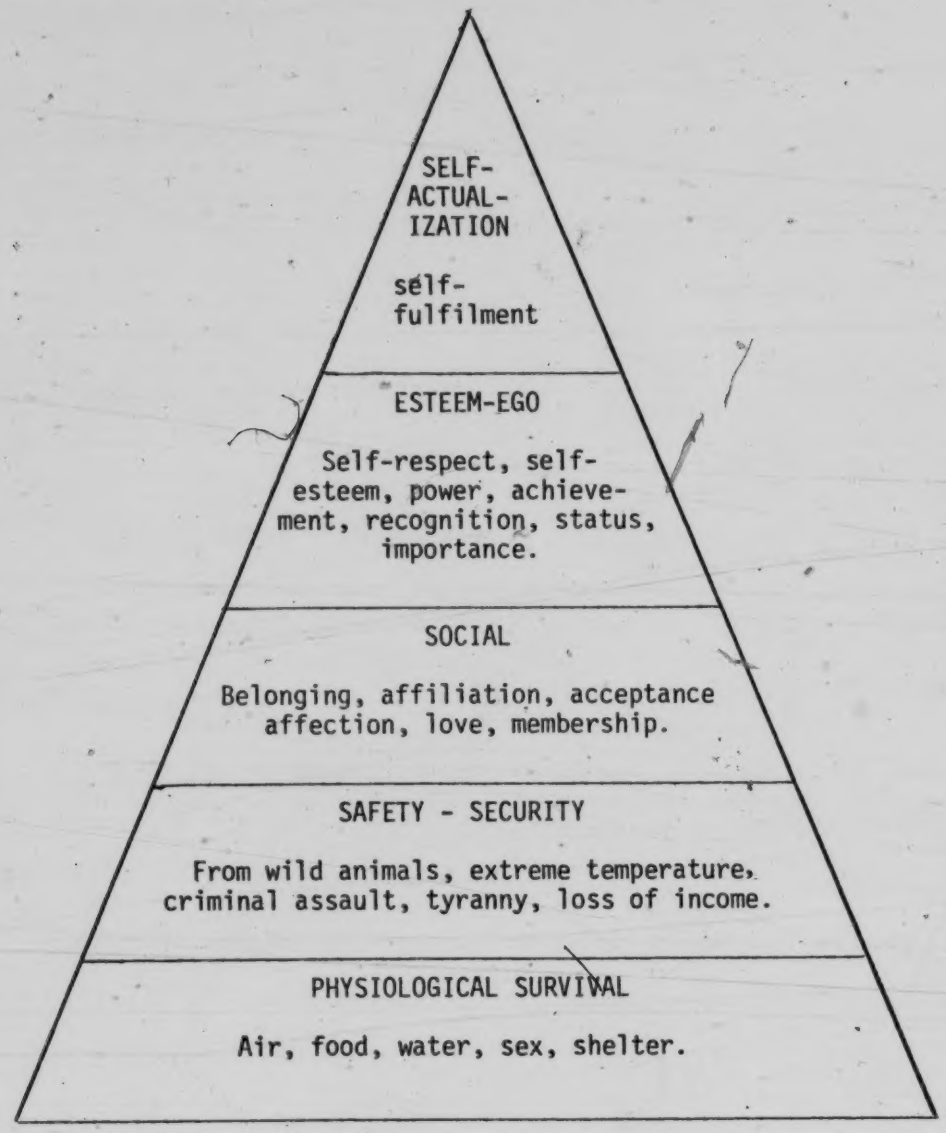


Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

adapted from: Maslow, Abraham. Motivation and Personality. New York: Harper and Row, 1954, pp. 1-30.

varying in their approach and specific service, have as a goal the betterment of human life. While for many years the services have been strongly directed at satisfaction of individual needs, like the theories of Maslow and Ackerman, today there is increasing emphasis on working with both individuals and groups and satisfaction of all needs including family and community. Family Life Education for example, is moving away from work with individuals in isolation to the recognition that all members of the family must be considered for family well-being. Education is continuing to recognize that family and community must be considered when providing educational opportunities for children.

Recreation as a Human Service Field

Likewise, recreation is changing, not merely with regard to satisfying certain types of needs, but in its entire role in the human service field. While organized recreation is a relative newcomer to the educational arena, its roots penetrate deeply into the social, emotional, and mental fibre of every Canadian. From a rather slow and unauspicious beginning as far back as 1853, recreation programming is finally on the threshold of attaining its full stature in our democracy. Its upswing has resulted for two major reasons. First, societal trends indicate more leisure time. With the mechanization of industry, specialization of labor, automation, cybernation, processing of foods, etc., we enjoy fewer and shorter working days. The average person in our society has close to 120 days of leisure each year, as well as five hours of free time daily at his disposal (Corbin, 1970). This time is in addition to the time available to thousands of Canadians not working at all due to exceedingly high levels of unemployment. As well, with an increased life expectancy due to such

things as immunology, public health services, antibiotics, geriatrics, vacations with pay, labor saving devices, etc., we have more years to participate in recreation.

Second, with the gradual dissolution of the Puritan work ethic, which associated goodness with hard work, recreation has not only become acceptable, but has finally been recognized as an essential and valuable service (Corbin, 1970; National Commission on Family Life Education, 1968). In fact, recreation has become a very crucial part of the human service field in responding to all types of human need--individual, family and community. Individually it provides for expression and creativity which Maslow suggests leads to the resolving of the ultimate need, that of actualizing one's potential. Group pursuits provide opportunities for socialization and a sharing of one's attainments. Family recreation increases time spent together as a family, as well as providing opportunities for enjoyable experiences with individuals whom you care for and are close to.

Community Information as a Part of Recreation Program Planning

Consequently, we find ourselves in a recreation explosion--an explosion which has first resulted in changes in philosophy and direction. As recreation is one human service group which is dictated to almost solely through expression of individual, family and community needs, recreational opportunities must be able to change with the demand. For example, at the present time there is a shift in emphasis from group recreational activities to provision of a choice between individual, group and family. With increased emphasis on the family as a unit, as in Family Life Education, the field of recreation is providing more opportunities for family recreation through such

activities as cross-country skiing, hiking and camping. Secondly, the recreation explosion has resulted in a desire for improvements in many aspects of recreation for example, programs, facilities, budgets and leadership development opportunities.

The question is: how are the recreation goals and decisions made relative to communities, in order to ensure satisfaction of human needs and specifically the individuals and families in these communities, and what information is required in order to make decisions?

Connor (1964), Corbin (1970), Degroot (1971), Kieren (1975), Poplin (1972) to name just a few, suggest that the best way for program planners to obtain the necessary information is to study the community and gather accurate knowledge of the group to whom the program will be given, the physical environment where the program will be held, as well as as much additional information about the community as possible.

While the specific details that are needed vary with each author, the principle behind obtaining them remains the same. The central question to be answered in assessing community needs is, what facts about this community are necessary to work with it effectively and/or what must be known about the community in order to avoid another scene like the one described in Grande Prairie? While this research is mostly concerned with program planning for recreation, the information required about communities must include much more than details about recreation. In fact, the information required for community program plannning is much the same for all areas of the human service field. Information is required about the individual, family and community that can assist programmers in acting as facilitators for all members of the population.

Kammeyer (1962) suggests for example that the "community" attributes that might be studied include population size (or a rural-urban dimension) (brackets included in original), population composition, including such variable factors as ethnic composition, religious composition, racial composition, or at a somewhat higher level of generality, the heterogeneity or homogeneity of the population. He also suggests that attributes of a historical nature may be significant. Kieren (1975, p.5) suggests that:

> A program planner should begin with the needs and goals of the group requesting a program. Factual information about the age, education background, marital status, as well as knowledge of unique characteristics of the group are necessary to select relevant content and experiences.

Once the key facts that are needed are determined, the next question is: How will the information be gathered? One doesn't arrive in a community with a clip board and questionnaire in hand, ready to collect information. Learning about a community takes time. Researchers (Degroot, 1977; Festinger, 1955; Poplin, 1972; Selltiz Jahoda, Deutsch, Cook, 1964) suggest a number of methods of data collection including survey, pure observation, content analysis, key informants, and community self-survey. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate three of these methods to determine which method is most appropriate for recreation programmers given restraints of time, energy, and money. The methods selected were pure observation, secondary sources, and key informants. Each method will be utilized in three similar Alberta communities by a trained, unbiased research assistant. Comparisons will be made on the following variables:

quantity of usable material collected, difficulty in obtaining material and quality of material obtained.

The researcher's interest in this issue stems from personal experience as a Recreation Consultant with Alberta Recreation, Parks and Wildlife over the past four years. Meeting with community members to discuss recreational concerns has emphasized the need for knowing and understanding details about the community in order to be able to function in it effectively. Without background knowledge, it is far too easy to make incorrect assumptions or be ignorant of important issues which may affect the total service to that community. The time available for researching communities before visits is minimal as are the funding and manpower. It is important therefore to determine some method of obtaining the necessary information considering the above factors.

This study is undertaken for three reasons: first, there is a practical need for this type of information for Recreators and Recreation Consultants, as well as individuals in other areas of the human service field; second, examination of methods for extracting community information has been minimal; third, in the few studies that have appeared, there are confusing and contradictory findings.

The following outline will constitute the basis of this thesis. Chapter two will present a critical review of the literature as it relates to community details that might be studied as well as identified methods of obtaining this information. Chapter three will outline the conceptual framework on which the research is based. Chapter four will describe the research design and methodology to be used. Chapter five will summarize the results and provide a discussion of the results.

Chapter six will include the research discussions, limitations and implications.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Defining "Community"

> "When I use a word", Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean, --nothing more and nothing less." "The question is", said Alice, "whether you can make things mean so many different things." (Milson, 1974, p.1).

We are all familiar with the difficulties that arise in word usage and word meaning and the manner in which serious conversation is hindered when participants use the same word with different meanings in mind. No better example of confusion over terminology can be found than in the term "community". The concept of community has been the concern of researchers, theorists, and practitioners for more than 200 years. It has been studied by sociologists, educators, economists, theologians, anthropologists, and politicians. In fact, the list of individuals and groups interested in "community" is endless, for community studies have been in the past, and are today, "in vogue". Even the word itself has become a catch-all term in social description: community action; community politics; community studies; community organization; community development; community school; community church; community mental health; and even community television have become fashionable phrases in our way of life. In all of these areas of study and action the elusive concept of community defines and specifies the thought and the activity in question (Plant, 1974).

Yet, even with all this usage, the emergence of a satisfactory means of defining community appears as remote as ever. This failure

to define community is not due to any lack of interest. Indeed, the problem is rather that there are, if anything, too many, rather than too few attempts at defining the term.

Perhaps the most well-known or at least the most frequently cited writing with regard to defining community came from Hillery. After assembling some 94 definitions of community, Hillery (1955, p.13) contended that "a community consists of persons in social interaction within a geographic area and having one or more additional common ties". Because of its basis in careful research and its support, at least in part, from numerous other authors (Bernard, 1974; Connor, 1964; French, 1969), Hillery's definition shall be used for the purposes of this thesis.

Community Differences

Despite acceptance of a single definition, communities can still vary immensely. The term community can refer to villages in a relatively undifferentiated agrarian society. It can refer to a backwater village of a more or less urbanized nation state. It can be used with reference to a suburban community, a neighbourhood region or an ethnic minority of a large industrial city. Or, a whole town could be studied as a community (Bell & Newby, 1974, foreward).

Regardless of the type of community under study, it will still display obvious differences from all other communities around it. This fact should become clearer following the summary of a study by Vogt and O'Dea (1953). The inquiry is focused upon a comparison of the Mormon community of Rimrock with the Texan community of Homestead. The necessary data has been condensed from the study into Table 1

which follows.

It is obvious from the data cited that the communities have a great likeness and have, in fact, three major similarities: (1) population; (2) ecological setting; and (3) variants of some general culture. As well, there are two obvious differences: (1) irrigation versus dry land farming and associated differences in settlement patterns (compact village versus isolated farmstead type); (2) a value stress upon co-operative community action versus a stress upon individual action. While this information is certainly valuable, it is not enough to provide complete understanding of the community and therefore does not serve as an adequate basis for indepth community work. Additional information about communities is required. For example, if further study is done on the communities of Rimrock and Homestead the significance of the similarities and differences listed becomes more obvious. It was noted that each of the communities was confronted with four similar situations. These situations included: (1) a tight land situation; (2) graveling of village streets; (3) construction of high school gymnasium; and (4) community dances. The response of the communities, to these situations, as summarized in Table 2, clearly indicates the kinds of similarities and differences found within communities and the many factors which make a community separate, distinct and different from its neighbours. As well, it emphasizes the importance of indepth information about a community in addition to the more obvious details such as population and location. A study of these factors alone in the case of Rimrock and Homestead resulted in a much different picture than in the final analysis when many factors were compared.

Table 1

A Comparison of Rimrock and Homestead

summarized from Vogt and O'Dea (1953, pp. 140 - 154)

ITEM	RIMROCK	HOMESTEAD
Population	Approximately 250	Approximately 250
Location	Southern portion of the Colorado Plateau in Western New Mexico; 40 miles from Homestead	Southern portion of the Colorado Plateau in Western New Mexico; 40 miles from Rimrock
Natural Environment	Elevation 7000 ft; landscape-mesa and canyon country; steppe climate; annual precip. 14 inches; located near base of mountain range which has a storage reservoir	Elevation 7000 ft; landscape-mesa and canyon country; steppe climate; annual precip. 14 inches
Industry	Irrigation farming - alfelfa and livestock	Dryland farming - pinto beans and livestock
History	Settled by Mormon missionaries in 1870's	Settled by migrants from the South Plains area of Western Texas and Oklahoma in 1930's
Land Ownership	149 sections of range land and 4 sections of irrigated or irrigable land	100 sections

ITEM	RIMROCK	HOMESTEAD
Economics	Family farm basic economic unit; partnership on kinship basis; own local trading post; privately owned commercial facilities	Farm units operated by nuclear families; no partnerships; local businesses
Community Organization	Church is central core of village	No central core of village
Value Orientations	Achievement and success; progress and optimism; rational mastery over nature; stress on community co-operation	Achievement and success; progress and optimism; rational mastery over nature; stress on individual independence

Table 2

A Comparison of Community Responses in

Rimrock and Homestead

summarized from Vogt and O'Dea (1953, pp. 140 - 154)

ITEM	RIMROCK	HOMESTEAD
Tight Land Situation	Money for initial land purchase borrowed from Church Community concern over community problem; Land used as a co-operative venture.	In 1934 additional tracts of land were available through the Dept. of Agriculture; Government funds to purchase large ranches around Homestead to be managed co-operatively by Board of Directors selected by community; scheme collapsed because of local emphasis on private rather than co-operative holdings.
Graveling of Village Streets	Streets in bad repair in 1950; construction company doing work nearby; meetings held to determine community feeling about approaching construction company to fix streets. $20. contribution from each family and contributions from local businesses enabled repairs to be done.	Construction company also building around Homestead. Offered to do streets if enough funds collected. Plan rejected; local businessmen independently hired construction company to dump gravel in front of business; rest of village streets remained a mess.
Construction of High School gymnasium	Plan for gymnasium presented to villagers; community discussion resulted in agreement to build; donations of 50 hours of labor or $50.; project completed successfully	Plan for gymnasium presented to villagers; plan rejected; some funds available, construction started; money ran out; construction stopped; gymnasium not completed.
The Community Dances	Community dances held weekly; lack of tension and fighting; little drinking and smoking; peaceful family affairs.	Community dances several times a year; tension and fighting between rival families; always looks as though dance may have to end.

Community Data and Program Planning

A number of authors support the importance attached to indepth information about a community prior to community work. (Allen, 1968; Bernard, 1973; Biddle, 1971; Biddle & Biddle, 1966; Connor, 1969; Hayes, Barth & Watson, Phillips, 1968; Hodge, 1959; Lord, 1976; Oxenham, 1970; U.K. Ministry of Overseas Development, 1970). While the statements, opinions, and priorities vary to some degree, most concur with Melvin (1975, p.55) in his suggestion that "a study and analysis of community make-up forms a framework for planning and programming".

While there is general agreement as to the need for having information about a community, there seems to be some differences as to the type of information required. Variation depends on a number of factors: first, the characteristics of the individual searching out the information and his/her professional specialty and/or area of interest. Degroot (1977) refers to the individuals and groups that are working in communities as change agents since they are often in the position of making or recommending decisions aimed at bringing about planned change. A list of community change agents might include public health workers, recreation consultants, education consultants, church workers, community development officers.

Sargent (1973) concurs with this title and with the variations that are a part of a change agent's style. He suggests that change agents must develop their own unique style, one that meets the needs of the client group, at the same time staying within the constraints imposed by the employer which in many cases, is the community. This suggests two additional factors which determine the type of community information required--needs of the client group and community constraints.

A fourth consideration is that the information required depends on the type of community work planned. The work may vary from projects involving the total community to plans involving one specialty only. Different types and amounts of information may be required for each.

Studying Communities

Indepth Community Studies

Indepth community studies involve those which include information on virtually every aspect of the community. A number of authors have discussed methods for this type of study (Bernard, 1973; Connor, 1964; Forest, 1973; Hand, 1958; Moschenross, 1976). While the methods vary in terms of number of factors and depth of information required about each factor, there are many similarities. For example, many authors undergoing indepth community studies investigate variables such as population characteristics, the economic base, the ecological relationships, the history of the community. The types of factors studied and the variation in styles of authors can be seen by looking closer at two of the methods.

Perhaps the most well known method is the "social compass" developed by Connor (1964). This social compass includes a set of elements and patterns which together make up the factors in a community which are essential for community study. The elements focus attention systematically on the community as a whole and include: (1) history; (2) space relations; (3) resources; (4) technology; (5) knowledge and beliefs; (6) values and sentiments; (7) goals; (8) norms; (9) positions and roles; (10) power; (11) leadership; (12) influence; (13) social rank; (14) sanctions. Within these elements people display a number of patterns in their social relationships as they live and work together.

These patterns consist of: (1) family; (2) education; (3) government; (4) economy; (5) religion; (6) recreation; (7) social class; (8) communication networks; (9) health; (10) agriculture; (11) groups.

Forest (1973) on the other hand, uses only seven major categories in analyzing communities: (1) social-psychological; (2) economic; (3) physiological and health; (4) socio-political; (5) education; (6) environment and natural resources; (7) ecological relationships. Each of these major categories would include income, farming efficiency, unemployment, marketing facilities, new industry, taxes paid.

Indepth community studies may be useful in a number of ways. In towns where tremendous change is expected to take place, they may be used to provide a basis of information for future planning. For example, news reports and town planners predict that the town of Grande Centre, Alberta is about to be the center of an oil "boom". Considerable planning is necessary to determine the gaps between existing and needed services. An indepth community study would be useful in this regard. A community which is experiencing a slight depression economically, for example, Grande Cache, Alberta, may use this type of study to determine the nature and status of individuals and services. An example of a community which did engage this type of study is Norman Wells, N.W.T. Researchers examined a great many factors relevant to that community as a basis for the town's developmental plan: the economic base; transportation services; land use; housing conditions; community facilities for education, health, protection, and recreation; local government and a variety of other services and facilities such as water, electricity, and topography (Government of the N.W.T., 1974).

Partial Community Studies

In many cases, a community study is undertaken in order to collect information for a particular part or service of the community. In these cases information about the total community is not always necessary and collecting it would only involve unnecessary use of time and resources. There are several examples of partial community studies: the sociological survey involving a number of "poverty areas" in Alberta completed by Hobart (1967); the research undertaken by the Social Services Department of the City of Winnipeg (1965); a study of community services done by the Alberta Department of Business Development and Tourism (1977); a recreational study done in 1969 by the Department of Youth (1967) examining such details as leisure time usage and availability and participation in recreation activities.

Each of these partial studies involves a situation in which data was collected for a particular community service and the factors studied were specifically related to that area of interest. While it would appear that the data collected in each project might be completely different, this is not the case, for although the major emphasis of the data varies, there is a quantity of additional information which is necessary for many of the studies, for example, demographic characteristics and economic base.

While many authors, as previously stated, support the importance of community data, workers and writers tend to follow trends in their actual use of it. First, we have a group who acknowledge the importance of all aspects of the community, but fail to take them into account during program planning (Warren, 1963). Second, we have a group who despite acknowledgement of the vast differences among communities,

continue to work on widespread generalizations that can lump communities together (Warren, 1963). Third, we have a group who recognize the importance of community data, gather it and use it accordingly. With increased experience in program planning and assistance in determining information about use of data, perhaps more community members will be able to join this group. A fourth group involves change agents who recognize the importance of understanding communities, but fail to understand how to assess needs, gather data, etc. (Degroot, 1977). This later part of the chapter will deal with this concern.

Collecting Community Data

This section will review the six major methods for reporting community data that have been presented in the literature. While each method has advantages and disadvantages, each is valuable for a specific kind of research. There is no one method which has been selected for overall use in all kinds of data collection.

Observation

Social research indicates a great many methods of collecting data. Perhaps the most primitive and at the very same time the most modern research technique is observation. Observation is the basic method of getting information about the world around us. Use of this method can range from casual, sporadic by-products of other investigations to fundamentally sound data-gathering tools. It becomes a scientific-technique to the extent that it serves a formulated research purpose, is planned systematically, is recorded systematically and related to general propositions, and is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability.

Advantages and disadvantages of observation have been discussed

by Festinger (1953) and Selltiz et al. (1964) among others. The advantages of the observation technique are: (1) it captures the natural social context in which the behavior occurs and makes it possible to record it as it occurs; (2) it yields data pertaining directly to behavior situations; (3) it identifies regularities and recurrences in social life; (4) it deals with subjects who cannot give verbal reports; and (5) it is independent of subjects' willingness to respond.

The disadvantages are: (1) the observer may not be present when behavior or event takes place; (2) unforeseeable factors may interfere with the observational task; (3) it is limited by duration of event; (4) there may be a problem of selection in determining what to record; (5) recording information may interfere with observation; and (6) it is not overly effective in gaining information about people's feelings, perceptions.

While the literature contains many examples of observational studies, one wonders at the amount of use this technique has locally or with research in certain areas. Many of the studies reported have been done by community development workers and/or anthropologists. Nonetheless, some examples in collecting community data might include a study done in the St. Louis inner suburbs where basic observation methods were employed for a period of four months in order to obtain information for community development work on a variety of community factors (Moschenross, 1976). In a second project in a London borough, a community leader used basic observation to become fully acquainted with the community (Griffiths, 1971). As well, numerous anthropological studies have employed observation in the examination of native life in

in the far north (Freuchen, 1961; Pryde, 1972).

Participant Observation

One specific type of observation used often in sociological studies is participant observation. In this procedure, the investigator is a part of the natural setting in which the observations are being made. Not only does the researcher participate to some degree in his own study, but he also gathers data about the individuals in his sample or universe. There is a wide variation in the degree of participation of the observer. Minimum participation may lead the researcher to take a distant observer role, trying not to get too close to the respondents or to influence them in any way. At the other extreme, the researcher may take one of the group's roles as advantage point for observation. The main purpose of participant observation is exploratory (Labovitz & Hagedorn, 1976).

Labovitz and Hagedorn (1976) and Black and Champion (1976) discuss a number of advantages and disadvantages of participant observation. The advantages are numerous: (1) observations take place in natural setting; (2) the observer is able to perceive emotional reactions; (3) by observing over extended period of time, a great deal of information can be collected; (4) the observer is able to record the context which gives meaning to the respondents expressions of opinions and values; and (5) if the observer can establish solid relations he may be able to ask sensitive questions.

Disadvantages are: (1) there may be a lack of reliability from random observations; (2) the participant observer may sensitize subjects by his presence thus altering behavior; (3) the actual role taken by the observer narrows his range of experience; (4) the observer may

become so involved in the group he loses objectivity; (5) observers must wait passively for occurences; (6) the lack of figures hinders attempts at comparability; (7) researcher may have problems with entry into the group; (8) some social scientists are very uncomfortable in observational settings; (9) an inability to record everything may result in bias; and (10) the openness of the role may skew behavior, but not being open may be unethical.

A number of very well-known community studies have used the technique of participant observation to gather needed data. One example is Wiseman's study of skid row alcoholics (Black & Champion, 1976). A second is Hollingshead's Elmtown's Youth, which looked at the impact of social class on adolescents (Hollingshead, 1959). A third example is Hobart's study of poverty areas in Alberta. In this case, participant observation was one of the sources of data (Hobart, 1967).

Questionnaire

The most frequently used social research instrument is the questionnaire. It is an instrument comprised of a series of questions that are filled in by the respondent himself. Generally there are three types: fixed response, open-end and combination. Fixed response questionnaires involve a fixed number of choices and the respondent checks the response that best fits him. Advantages of this type are: (1) it is easy to score and code; (2) no writing is required by the respondent; (3) it facilitates completion of the questionnaire because it is quick and easy; and (4) if mailed, they are more likely to be returned because no writing is needed. Disadvantages of this type are: (1) there is a potential inability for the researcher to provide respondent with all relevant responses; and (2) may see "get it over

with quick" response set.

Open-end questions are those requiring short or lengthy replies by respondents. Advantages are: (1) it is useful when researcher has little prior information; (2) it is useful in gaining insight into behavior studied. Disadvantages are: (1) there may be difficulty in coding or classifying; (2) possible bias may occur; and (3) it is time-consuming.

Looking at questionnaires overall, advantages are: (1) they are reasonably inexpensive; (2) it is possible to gain information from a wide geographic area; (3) they require little skill to administer; (4) they can be administered to large numbers simultaneously; (5) it provides for uniformity; (6) allows for confidence in respondents through anonymity; (7) there is little pressure on subject for immediate response. Disadvantages are: (1) possibility of illiteracy; (2) low return rates; (3) fallability of memory; (4) lack of depth interviewing or probing for meaning of statements; (5) must be restricted in length and scope because respondents lose interest or become fatigued (Babbie, 1973; Black & Champion, 1976; Greve, 1973; Hauser, 1964; Labovitz & Hagedorn, 1976; Northern Development Branch, 1977; Regional and Community Development Section, United Nations, 1971; Schwechten, 1973; Selltiz et al., 1964; Sykes & Livingstone, 1971).

While there are a number of examples of community surveys conducted through questionnaire, the following provide a sample. The first example is of a survey conducted in 1966 in Oakland, California. It was a study of different classes of poverty areas (Babbie, 1973). A second was conducted by the Northern Development Branch of Alberta Business Development and Tourism in 1977. They completed a Community Services

inventory through the use of questionnaires (Northern Development Branch, 1977). A third example is that of a study done by Sykes and Livingstone (1971) to survey the public reactions to new town living.

Interview

The interview is easily the most sociological of all research techniques. That is because its very form is derived from verbal interaction between the investigator and the respondent. Many insist that the best way to find out why persons behave as they do is to quiz them about their conduct directly by talking to them (Black & Champion, 1976). The interview is used primarily to study problems that rely on verbal expression for their comprehension or as an adjunct to other methods of data collection.

Festinger (1953), Labovitz and Hagedorn (1976) and Selltiz et al. (1964) have outlined a number of advantages and disadvantages of this method. The advantages are: (1) it is useful for obtaining information at the "gut level"; (2) it provides insights into unexplored dimensions of a topic; (3) it is possible to obtain information quickly; (4) it ensures that respondent interpret questions properly; (5) it allows greater flexibility in questionning; (6) it allows control over context, information can be checked for validity by informal cues; (7) it removes the problem of illiteracy.

Disadvantages are: (1) qualities of interviewer are most important; (2) qualities of interviewees are most important; (3) sensitivity of subjects may hinder interview; (4) subjects may have a faulty memory; (5) they tap opinions and preceived behavior but not actual behavior; (6) respondents may be unqualified for providing certain kinds of data; (7) some responses may be invalid; (8) respondents must understand

language; (9) there may be a problem recording information; (10) there may be a problem in limiting responses.

Interviews were one method that was used in Riesman's study The Lonely Crowd (Riesman, 1950). As well, they were used by Chatterjee and Bhattacherjee (Chatterjee, 1969) in their study of the effectiveness of community development workers. In this case, community development workers felt that determining information about the community prior to extensive work was mandatory. They chose the interview method to obtain this information.

Key Community Informants

A method of collecting data that is related to interviews is that of using key informants. The informants are usually key community leaders who have a broad concern for public issues and are in positions of effecting, implementing, and enforcing decisions. Key community informants might include mayors, members of town council, clergy, public health officials, pharmacists, school principals, recreation directors, etc. (Bridgeland & Sofranko, 1975; Crain & Rosenthal, 1967).

Once again, this is a method which seems to be used only rarely and almost always in conjunction with another research method. Greve (1973) used key informants in the British Community Development Project in collecting information relative to the local area and the identification of the major issues that would affect this project. Griffith (1971) employed key informants as one method in collecting information relative to a London borough project.

Secondary Sources

The final method of data collection to be covered in this chapter is secondary sources. Supporters of this method believe that it is not

always necessary or even advisable for social scientists to always generate original data when there is a great quantity of existing data already compiled. Secondary sources involve the systematic examination of documents, e.g., government records, census reports, vital statistics, survey results, newspapers, radio and television broadcasts, magazines, journals, motion pictures, company sales receipts, records concerning retirement, hiring and firing, voting records, records of judicial decisions, photographs, maps, sermons, written documents such as letters, books, or personal documents such as diaries.

Advantages are: (1) the sources cover a wide range of topics for a number of years; (2) the researcher cannot sensitize subjects; (3) there is a saving in time and money for the information is ready made; (4) one can verify findings from primary research; (5) there is a large quantity of data available.

Disadvantages are: (1) data collected for other purposes must be reclassified for new uses; (2) there may be problems in getting access to materials; (3) knowledge of whereabouts of materials is not always known; (4) there may be a question as to the reliability of data; (5) many secondary sources are not current so a picture of the present is hard to determine with accuracy; (6) comparability of public records is difficult over time; (7) information in existing documents was selectively deposited and survived selectively; (8) researcher might not sensitize subjects, but whoever recorded that data might have; (9) secondary sources may be unreliable owing to distortion by biased researchers (Babbie, 1973; Black & Champion, 1976; Hauser, 1964; Labovitz & Hagedorn, 1976; Selltiz et al., 1964).

Secondary sources is a method of data collection which has been

used in the past, but is becoming more and more popular. A great many studies were completed using secondary sources as their source of data: Wirth (1956), employed the use of historical records in his book The Ghetto; Borbaugh's The Gold Coast and the Slum (1929) used statistical material and personal documents; Shaw's The Jack Roller and Brothers in Crime were written from autobiographies; Durkheim used written materials to study suicide rates in different geographical areas (Babbie, 1973; Stein, 1960).

It has been illustrated that a great many methods of collecting data about communities are available. It would seem that while each method has advantages and disadvantages, each is useful in one or more types of sociological study.

Summary

In summary, chapter two has consisted of a review of the literature. Community was defined and the differences between communities discussed. Next, the importance of community data was examined along with a description of the type of data that is needed and the kind of community studies that may be undertaken. The final segment of the chapter dealt with the various methods of data collection and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

While this information was required for the methodology and was instrumental in the research design, the project had its initial beginning through the author's personal plan for program development. It was through personal experience, using this model for program development, that the importance of community need first came to the fore. This model is presented in chapter three as the conceptual framework.

Chapter 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Chapters one and two have shown the necessity of intensive community study prior to program planning. It is necessary now to describe the use of this data in the program planning process.

Program planning is an essential aspect of the human service field. While the type of program planning varies according to the human service agency involved, the type of program planned and the workers' individual styles, there is often a common thread running through each process. The majority of the program planning processes are arrived at through a problem solving approach. Kieren et al. (1978, p.82) define problem solving as: "the rational process by which persons solve problems". Kieren goes on to suggest that this process involves a number of steps such as identifying the problem, establishing goals, assessing resources, generating alternatives, assessing alternatives and acting and evaluating actions. A number of other authors use similar problem solving methods for program planning. Lindeman (1921) uses a model with ten steps. Sehnert (1960) employs one with eight steps. Each it seems, while using different titles, follows a similar sequence beginning with the recognition of the problem, requesting assistance, seeking and selecting alternatives, the actual plan, and the evaluation. There are however, some major differences in the models, for example, some authors use steps which may not appear in others. Such is the case with Sehnert's (1960) step three which suggests a planning period during which a steering committee conducts a survey to do a needs assessment. Not all authors would think this step essential. Similarly,

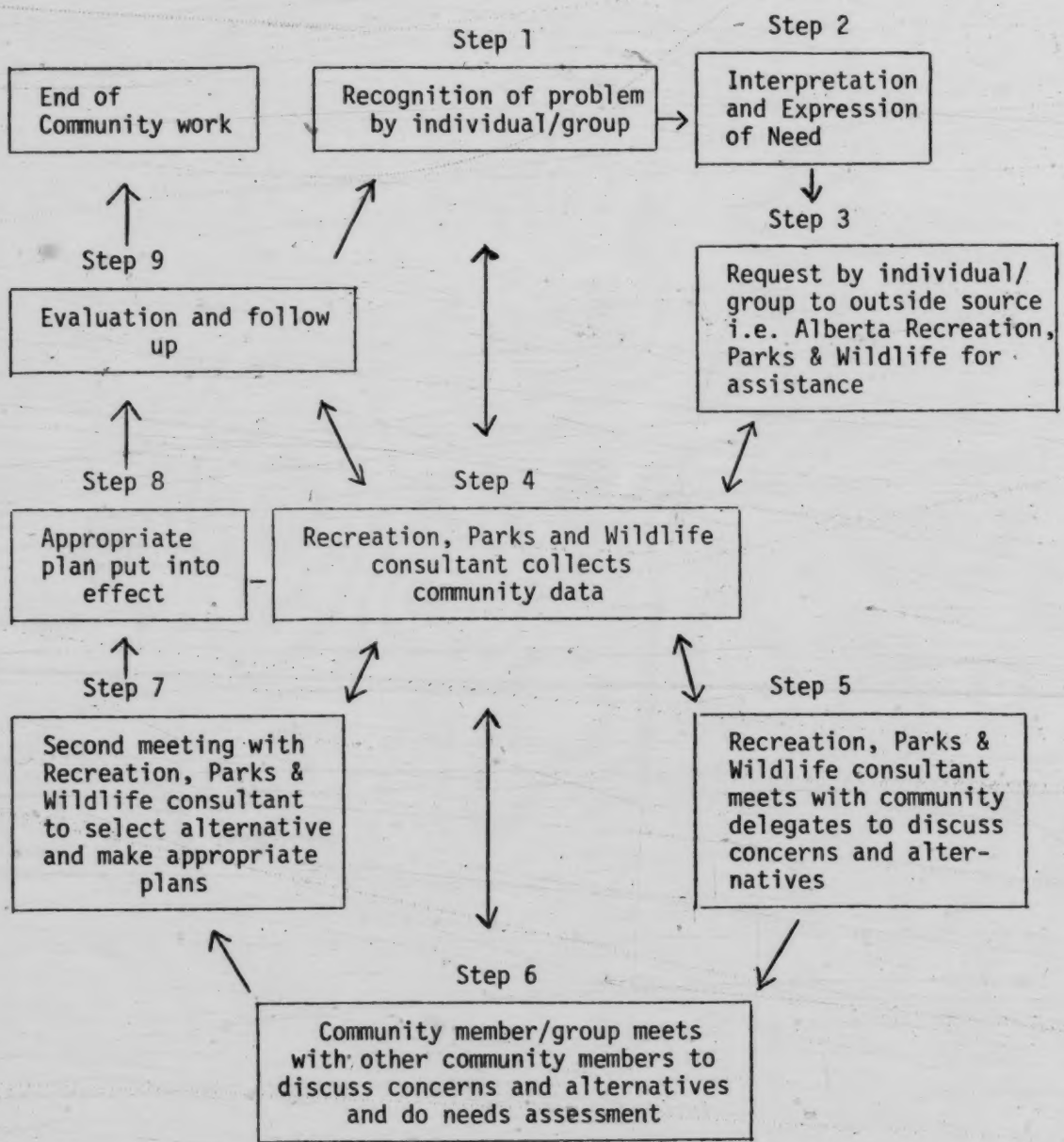
the majority of the problem solving models for program planning do not include a community assessment step. Sehnert (1960) refers to it vaguely in step six when he suggests an operational or action period, a part of which is gathering data about community problems. While this may be part of community assessment there is more to it than that. As well, the timing of the community study is important. Some authors believe it is essential that the assessment take place early in the problem solving process while other authors might disagree with this placement.

While a number of these problem solving models are useful in thinking about the program planning, each human service professional must develop his or her own style and theory about human service (Brammer, 1973). For this reason, based on extensive reading in this area, and recreation program planning experience, the following framework has been developed. As this model was developed for use in a specific employment situation, the development of various steps or ideas may have been influenced by extraneous factors such as department regulations or policies. This model can be seen in Figure 2.

In order to completely understand the process, it may be worthwhile to go through it step by step. First, a movement starts in the mind of one person who becomes aroused to some problem or need. He discusses it informally, perhaps safely among friends or fellow workers and is encouraged to look for cohorts. Inquiry is made as to where to seek help. Two, the community member attempts to interpret and express need. Three, the community member contacts the appropriate helping agency, in this case Alberta Recreation, Parks and Wildlife. Brief discussion ensues as to the nature of the problem and a meeting

Figure 2

Model for Recreation Program Planning


Step 1
Recognition of problem by individual/group
Step 2
Interpretation and Expression of Need
Step 3
Request by individual/ group to outside source i.e. Alberta Recreation, Parks & Wildlife for assistance
Step 4
Recreation, Parks and Wildlife consultant collects community data
Step 5
Recreation, Parks & Wildlife consultant meets with community delegates to discuss concerns and alternatives
Step 6
Community member/group meets with other community members to discuss concerns and alternatives and do needs assessment
Step 7
Second meeting with Recreation, Parks & Wildlife consultant to select alternative and make appropriate plans
Step 8
Appropriate plan put into effect
Step 9
Evaluation and follow up
End of Community work

date is set. Four, prior to the community meeting, the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife consultant does a preliminary study of the community to find out as much information about the community as possible that relates to the issue at hand, for example, existing recreation programs and facilities, staffing, community support, history, etc.. Five, having at least a general understanding of the community, the consultant meets with the initiator of the problem in addition to other community delegates. Concerns and alternatives are discussed. As a result of this meeting, additional information about the community is gathered. Six, the community member(s) seeks public opinion and makes an attempt to analyze and project community needs. Once again additional information about the community becomes apparent. Seven, a second meeting is held between the consultant and the community member(s). Alternatives are discussed, one is selected and an over-all plan begins to take shape. Roles are defined. More information about the community is noted. Eight, the appropriate plan is put into effect. Again community information is collected. Nine, the consultant again meets with the community group to allow for evaluation and plans for follow up. Following this step, two choices are apparent. Either the community work is completed and no new work initiated; or the program and follow up leads to the recognition of a new need and the process begins again. While it is obvious that changes may take place in this process, for example, step six and seven could possibly be eliminated if all delegates are adequately prepared for step five, there are certain steps which must be present. For example, step four is not only instrumental to the design, it must be allowed for after each of the other steps, for each contact with

the community increases the repertoire of knowledge known about that community. Likewise, each program or plan initiated in the community may change the community to some degree. Without the initial data and the continual updates, it is far too easy for change agents to make erroneous decisions or assumptions which could negatively affect the entire program.

Thus, program planning is a circular process with flexible steps and requiring continuous feedback. The process may change according to the need, however, regardless of the type of program planned, some knowledge about the community is necessary with continuous updates as the work progresses.

The following chapter will outline the research design and will present the accompanying methodology.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this research was to examine three methods of data collection for community assessment in three Alberta towns in order to determine which method is most appropriate for recreation programmers. This chapter deals with the study methodology--the methods of data collection that were utilized, the communities in which these methods were used and the type of information gathered.

Rationale for Selection of Community Factors

While many authors note the importance of community factors, a much smaller number actually suggest specific factors to be considered or their reasons for using them. Only a very few studies related to recreation and of these, only one could be found which referred directly to a community recreation inventory (Department of Youth, 1967). The factors to be considered were selected then from two sources--community studies designed for purposes other than recreation and personal experience in recreation programming. From the many factors discussed in the literature, thirteen were selected for use in this study. These thirteen seemed to cover the major areas about a community that might be important for recreation program planning. Together with the detailed information requested under each major factor, it was thought that the information would provide a complete and accurate picture of each community. The thirteen factors selected were the following:

- geographical description
- population
- history
- economic structure
- local government
- organizational density
- housing and property
- education
- recreation and leisure
- health
- religion
- other services
- communications

Each of these factors will be briefly described in the following section. The first, geographical description, has obvious uses. In order to work in a community, one must know where it is and how to get there. The geology of the area may influence land use plans. Major geographical markings may have a positive or negative effect in recreation program planning, but undoubtedly they will be of influence, for example, the river valley of Edmonton has contributed immensely to recreational development.

The second factor to be considered is population. One cannot make any plans in a community without having a good understanding of who lives in the community and something about them. The ethnic composition for example, not only influences recreational and

cultural programming: Aiken and Mott (1970) suggested that ethnic diversity is a measure of heterogeneity and involvement in community programs and policies. Likewise, age of the population is important. Once again, the factor not only affects the type of services and facilities provided: Bridgeland and Sofranko (1975) suggest that there are several reasons for hypothesizing a positive relationship between the presence of a high proportion of youth in a community and level of mobilization. Bridgeland and Sofranko (1975) also maintain that younger age groups are more prone to involvement in environmental improvement activities.

A third factor, history, is significant for a number of reasons. Often times past events have been cause and/or effect of existing situations. Delving into the history can provide insights into conflicting values and factions as well as the significance of certain traditions, myths or ceremonies (Connor, 1969).

With the increased costs of recreation programs, facilities and staff, the economic structure of the community becomes exceedingly important. Major industries and employers can provide much needed financial assistance. For example, Proctor and Gamble have contributed immensely to recreational opportunities in the Grande Prairie region. Likewise, Great Canadian Oil Sands has contributed to development in Fort McMurray. Bridgeland and Sofranko (1975) believe that communities with high levels of poverty and unemployment are less likely to develop long-standing networks of involvement in community affairs or community organizations thus inhibiting community mobilization.

The fifth factor is local government, which researchers suggest has an impact on a great many if not all community programs. Dye

(1964) found that the form of government influenced annexation schemes. Along the same lines, research has shown that the form of city government was a key factor in referenda success on flouridation issues (Crain & Rosenthal, 1967). Obviously the nature of municipal services that are provided are important. Examination of the type of department allotted to recreation in addition to the budget and staff allocations may provide substantial information as to the status of recreation in the community.

Organizational density has also proven to be important in community programming. Aiken and Alford (1970) argue that organizational density and complexity underlie explanations of community innovativeness. Crain and Rosenthal (1967) profess that one of the major differences between communities is the number of people who can be mobilized in a campaign and this is largely indicated by voluntary memberships. As well, a thorough examination of organization memberships may provide a true indication of the concentration of power in a community. Hawley and Duggar support this idea as well as suggesting that the organizational complexity provides insight into the strength of community networks (Bridgeland & Sofranko, 1975).

Information on housing and property provides for an important understanding of the home and the type of recreational opportunities that may be enjoyed there as well as indicating new and future community needs. It is essential that housing developers and recreators work closely together. A positive example of this cooperation, is the planning on behalf of Leduc town council, for a park in their new subdivision of South Park.

The eighth factor for consideration is education. It provides

important information if for no other reason than the fact that education and recreation should or do work closely together in a community. As well it provides necessary data on school facilities which can be used for recreational purposes and could serve to avoid duplication in the provision of new facilities and programs. Transportation to and from school provides insight not only into a child's recreational time, but the parents' time as well.

In planning for future recreation programming, an inventory of existing facilities and programs is mandatory. Likewise, it is necessary to have a good knowledge of the types of recreational pursuits community members are interested in as well as the time they have available for participating. For example, a private group in Leduc developed plans for a court club. Prior to any purchases or construction, individuals were surveyed through the local newspaper as to their desire for such a club. It was only following expressed interest in racquet activities that the venture proceeded.

Information on community health is valuable not only because of the age old relationship between health and recreation, but also because of the tremendous expansion of recreational programming into health settings. Active treatment hospitals, nursing homes, auxiliary hospitals, etc. are now offering recreational opportunities not only as diversion, but as an essential part of the patient's therapy. Likewise, recreation as a discipline, probably has exceeded education and social services in presenting viable, enriching alternatives for the disabled population. As well, recreation has become a very major factor in the lives of senior citizens. Close relationships are being established between medical and recreational

personnel in providing many services, one example of which is fitness and maintenance programs.

Religion as a factor for study, provides information on possible community leaders, trends in community life, as well as major activities. In some communities, religion obviously plays a more important role than others. For example, it would be necessary for recreators in Cardston to be very involved in religious policies and plans in providing recreational services.

Factor twelve, other services, is in fact a mini community inventory. The services available may influence recreation in many ways. First, a number of private recreation ventures are included. Community recreation services may simply support these operations or work in conjunction with them. Second, essential services may lead to community "rifts" or concerns which affect all community life, for example, a garbage collectors' strike may indirectly affect all services. Third, essential services may affect a person's willingness to reside in a community, for example if it is necessary to have water trucked into a community, it may be unwise for residents who want a swimming pool to move to that community.

Communications affect all individuals everywhere. What we read, hear or see has tremendous influence on our behavior. Good advertising may mean the difference between success and failure in a program. Television or other media services which may be considered recreation in themselves, may cut down on attendance at public recreation programs. Mobility, while rather difficult to measure, may influence not only attendance at existing programs, but the development of new programs and facilities. Grande Centre and Cold

Lake, two towns in northeastern Alberta four miles apart, have very few recreational facilities yet each has a very large arena. A study in mobility of local residents may have indicated that only one arena was necessary leaving enough money for a swimming pool. As no study was done, two arenas exist both of which have limited use and no other facilities are financially possible.

These thirteen factors were considered to be the major headings necessary for understanding a community in order to plan for recreation programming and development. It was felt that these major headings supplemented by the individual entries under each major factor provided a comprehensive picture of each community. In order to facilitate recording the data and using it, data recording sheets were developed on which to place the information as it was collected. These sheets contained three columns: the first listed the factor under study; the second contained a space for the information collected on each factor; the third consisted of a space on which the source of the information was recorded. A sample of the complete data recording booklet can be seen in appendix A.

Selection of the Methods of Data Collection

Following selection of the community factors that would be examined, it was necessary to determine which research methods would be tested to collect the information. The methods selected were: pure observation, key informants, and secondary sources. A number of the same advantages can be applied to all three of these methods. First, each of the methods can be employed with minimum lead time. Second, and associated with number one, they can be done immediately prior to the planned community program. For example, if a community

meeting was scheduled for a Tuesday afternoon, observation could be undertaken that morning; likewise, the other two methods. Third, each of these three methods is relatively inexpensive. Each required little more than a single community visit which may be necessary anyhow for some other aspect of the planning process. Fourth, the research involves only a very few community members. This provides less opportunity for refusals. Fifth, it is not necessary for the researchers to have extensive experience in social research. Each method is relatively easy and except for interviewing key informants, requires little face-to-face contact.

In order to provide additional justification for use of these three methods of data collection, it may be useful to briefly discuss some of the methods which were not chosen for use here. For example, in looking at participant observation, it becomes immediately obvious that recreation programmers from outside the community would not be able to move in to that community for a couple of months simply to collect data. The questionnaire requires considerable lead time as well as the possibility of low return rates. While questionnaires were once considered relatively inexpensive, the increase in postal rates has nullified this advantage to some degree.

Selection of Communities

The three communities selected were Morinville, Devon and Stony Plain. While little was known about the communities, they were chosen on the basis of four common characteristics: (1) the population of each according to the 1978-79 Travel Alberta road map was between 2000-3000; (2) each community was within a 30 mile radius of the Edmonton city limits; (3) each centre had a weekly newspaper; (4) each

town had a formalized recreation department. This size of population was selected in order to allow for a manageable, but interesting study. The thirty mile radius was included in consideration of travelling time and expenses. The third and fourth characteristics were mostly similarities that were discovered after selection of the communities; however, they are notable characteristics to standardize as well. The weekly newspaper allows at least one major secondary source; the formalized recreation department encourages some type of follow up in which the data collected can be used.

A fourth community was selected as well in order to facilitate a pre-test. This community was Redwater. While Redwater did not match the common characteristics of the other three, for example, population was slightly under 2000 and distance from Edmonton was more than 30 miles, it was similar enough to provide a more than adequate pre-test.

The Researchers

The data collection was accomplished by three unbiased research assistants all of whom had some social science research training. While two of the researchers had considerable prior research experience, none of the researchers had prior experience with either this type of research or the method of data collection they were asked to investigate. It was therefore felt that all researchers were evenly matched with regard to background and no one research assistant had obvious advantages over another.

Training Procedures

All research assistants were brought together for a single session of project training. In the beginning, while waiting for everyone to arrive, coffee was served and light conversation was initiated in

an attempt to make everyone comfortable. Introductions were made and the purpose of the research outlined. Following a general overview of what was to take place, the method of data collection that each research assistant was to use was decided. Each of the research assistant's names were placed on a piece of paper, folded and placed in a pile on the table. Likewise the three methods of data collection were placed in another pile. One name and one method were drawn simultaneously.

Following method selection, research assistants were given a black binder with all the necessary information needed for the project. All binders were identical except for the second page. The first page provided a time and activity schedule. The second page included a brief discussion of the what, why and how of each technique. These two components of the binder are duplicated in appendix B. Each research assistant received only the page discussing the method they had been assigned. Third, an excerpt from a book called Elmtown's Youth was enclosed and finally a number of copies of the data recording booklets were attached.

Proceeding through the black book, the time line was discussed and researchers were asked to read the excerpt from Elmtown's Youth. This excerpt was used to help orient researchers to the idea of community studies, how they were accomplished, and the procedures involved. Next, the data recording sheets were discussed. Each page was reviewed and any questions answered. Questions generally focused on the nature of the information required. Finally, a discussion was held privately with each research assistant to ensure total understanding of the method to be used. All researchers were cautioned

that this was not a competition among individuals. As well, they were asked not to see each other from the beginning of the actual data collection to the completion. It would therefore be assured that researchers did not collect information from each other.

The Pre-test

The pre-test was run in Redwater during the week prior to the data collection. The purposes of the pre-test were many: (1) to familiarize the research assistants with the procedures involved in the study; (2) to have a trial run of the data sheets to determine problem areas; (3) to familiarize the research assistants with use of the data sheet so that misconceptions could be eliminated and all areas of concern clarified; (4) to acquaint the research assistants with their method of data collection so that queries could be answered; (5) to provide an opportunity for the research assistants to do the pre-planning for their data collection where necessary so that they would know what was required and how long it would take. For example, the research assistant using key informants would receive some necessary information on making appointments, doing interviews, etc.; (6) generally, to provide a trial run of the project so that trouble spots could be resolved.

Results of the Pre-test

On the afternoon of the pre-test, the research assistants came together so that the results of the pre-test could be determined. Each of the research assistants met privately with the researcher and then the group as a whole were gathered together. Generally, the pre-test was successful, was enjoyed by all research assistants and suggested few problems with either the design, the methods of data

collection or the data sheets. One suggestion was that more time be allowed so that it would be possible to collect more data. The idea was examined, but due to previous time commitments on the part of one of the research assistants, seemed impractical and it was decided to leave the time alloted for each study at three hours. There were a few minor questions with regard to the data sheets, but these were answered easily. All researchers were concerned about the inability to get information in some areas. Researchers were encouraged to continue using the assigned method of data collection to collect as much information as possible, but not to be concerned about information they couldn't gather. No major changes resulted from the pre-test, however it served as a useful and essential tool in examining procedures and methods and orientating research staff. All researchers found it a positive experience.

The Data Collection

All data was collected on three consecutive days. The first day, all researchers visited Morinville; the second, Stony Plain; the third, Devon. Each visit lasted three hours. All information was recorded on the data coding sheets provided. Appointments for viewing existing documents or interviewing key informants was allowed prior to the actual community visit.

Reporting the Data

During the afternoon of the last data collection day, each research assistant met individually with the researcher in order to report the data collected. The discussion revolved around the nature of the information collected, the degree of difficulty in obtaining the information, as well as additional information that might have a bearing

on the project. Three data recording booklets were collected from each research assistant--one from each community.

Evaluating the Information

Evaluation of the information was planned to consist of a number of major parts. First, it would be examined in terms of quantity. Simply, out of a possible 118 pieces of information, the writer would count the number of items on which some information appeared. Second, as a result of the report back discussions with each research assistant, some knowledge would be received as to the degree of difficulty in obtaining the information. Consideration would be given to such factors as: difficulty in arranging appointments, frustration levels, comfortableness with method, co-operativeness of community, and time required to gather required information. The number of points on this factor would be counted out of a maximum 50 as follows:

50 - little or no difficulty

35 - some difficulty but managed most of the information easily

20 - major difficulty, but managed some information

5 - great difficulty.

These point values were selected on the basis that this information was only about half as important as the other two variables. As well, due to the interpretive nature of this factor it was decided that emphasis should be minimized. Third, analysis would include a rating on the quality, depth and usefulness of the information as determined by four outside sources. Four experienced recreation programmers would be given the information to examine. Without knowledge of the project, or of the method they were evaluating, each programmer would rate each

completed booklet out of a possible 25. Each data collection method would thereby be evaluated in each community on the basis of a 268 point maximum, or an 804 maximum totalling the three communities. These final scores (out of 804) would then be compared relative to the three methods. See Table 3 for the analysis sheet.

Two other factors which may be worth of study at another time--time and cost were held constant. This was standardized to assist in the hiring of research assistants. Each community visit lasted three hours and each researcher was paid $250.00 with no additional funds for expenses.

In summary, Chapter four has included a discussion of the research design. A presentation of the data received follows in Chapter five.

Table 3

Analysis Sheet

DATA COLLECTION METHOD	COMMUNITY	QUANTITY OF INFO./118	DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY /50	QUALITY OF INFORMATION				SUB-TOTAL BY COMMUNITY /268
				PRO-GRAMMER #1 /25	PRO-GRAMMER #2 /25	PRO-GRAMMER #3 /25	PRO-GRAMMER #4 /25	
OBSERVATION	Morinville							
	Devon							
	Stony Plain							
Observation Totals for all three Communities								Grand Total /804
KEY INFORMANTS	Morinville							
	Devon							
	Stony Plain							
Key Informants Totals for all three Communities								Grand Total /804
SECONDARY SOURCES	Morinville							
	Devon							
	Stony Plain							
Secondary Sources Total for all three Communities								Grand Total /804

Chapter 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Three methods of data collection, observation, key informants, and secondary sources, were examined in the light of their usefulness for extracting community data necessary for recreation program planning from three Alberta communities--Morinville, Devon, and Stony Plain. The information collected was to be evaluated against three major criteria: the quantity of information collected, the degree of difficulty in gathering the information, and the overall quality of the information. The results are presented through a discussion of each of these factors.

Quantity of Information

The process for determining the quantity of information was simple. Each piece of information collected was recorded on the coding booklet provided. This coding booklet, as previously discussed, is found in appendix A. The coding booklet provided spaces for 118 different pieces of information. The quantity of the information was determined by simply adding up the number of factors on which some information appeared providing for a score out of 118. Scores ranged from 30 - 107 per community with considerable difference among the three methods of data collection. The research assistant using the key informant method collected the most information with a total in the three communities of 307 from a possible 354. The observational method produced the second greatest quantity of information with a total score for the three communities of 228. The secondary sources method collected the least amount of information with a score of 147. The master tally sheet which outlines all scores may be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Analysis Sheet

DATA COLLECTION METHOD	COMMUNITY	QUANTITY OF INFO./118	DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY /50	QUALITY OF INFORMATION				SUB-TOTAL BY COMMUNITY /268
				PRO-GRAMMER #1 /25	PRO-GRAMMER #2 /25	PRO-GRAMMER #3 /25	PRO-GRAMMER #4 /25	
OBSERVATION	Morinville	81	30	20	12	18	4	165
	Devon	78	35	16	10	15	4	158
	Stony Plain	69	30	15	10	12	4	140
Observation Totals for all three Communities		228	95	51	32	45	12	Grand Total 463 /804
KEY INFORMANTS	Morinville	107	40	23	19	20	10	219
	Devon	94	40	18	16	22	9	199
	Stony Plain	106	40	22	20	24	8	220
Key Informants Totals for all three Communities		307	120	63	55	66	27	Grand Total 638 /804
SECONDARY SOURCES	Morinville	30	16	6	8	9	8	77
	Devon	60	34	12	20	6	8	140
	Stony Plain	57	44	11	7	3	15	137
Secondary Sources Total for all three Communities		147	94	29	35	18	31	Grand Total 354 /804

Degree of Difficulty

The second area considered in evaluating the data was the degree of difficulty experienced in collecting it. These scores were arrived at through an interview following the data collection, between the researcher and the research assistants. A rating was arrived at out of a possible 50 points for each community. Factors were considered such as the co-operation of the town in granting interviews and allowing opportunities for viewing secondary source material; quantity of time needed; preparation time; degree of frustration and anxiety of research assistant; and overall difficulties in using the method such as inability to contact people. Once again when totalling the numbers for each of the three communities, the key informant method received the highest score, with observation second and secondary sources third. This time the scores of observation and secondary sources were much closer than was the case in the quantity of information. Regardless of the method used, there were difficulties with each of them. Some of the difficulties experienced in using the observation method were as follows: large quantities of road construction, in and around towns, particularly in Morinville, made driving very difficult and therefore it was not easy to observe in all parts of town; the observer did not have enough time to observe everything required; the time of day and the time of year proved critical in doing select kinds of observation; i.e. certain types of recreation programming; the observer had difficulty concentrating; the observer had difficulty recording the information; the observer was not sure about the accuracy of the data collected. There were also difficulties with the key informant method: it required considerable preparation time in deciding who to interview and to contact

the individuals to arrange the interviews; the individuals preferred for the interviews were not always available; the individuals interviewed did not always have the information at their finger tips; the information was not always factual and therefore required verification; the interviewer found this process somewhat threatening; and a good deal of the success of this method seemed to depend on the co-operativeness of the individuals involved.

Difficulties with the secondary sources method were: there is an ongoing possibility of outdated material; there was not enough time to collect the necessary data; it was not always easy or possible to locate necessary information; considerable information could not be found using this method; and a good portion of the success of this method seems to depend on the co-operativeness of the community individuals.

As well, there were some factors which provided difficulty for all methods. First, the town of Morinville proved somewhat unco-operative in contributing the necessary information. This resulted from the fact that the employers were busy preparing tax notices as well as relocating their town offices. Second, the study was done during the summer months which allowed little opportunity to collect information on the educational aspects of the data sheets. Third, the visits to Stony Plain were affected dramatically by an unusually severe rainstorm which hit the entire region. The rain affected driving, walking, seeing as well as the emotional state of both the research assistants and the community members.

Quality of Information

The quality of the data was determined in the following manner.

The data booklets were given to four unbiased professional recreation programmers to examine, compare, and score. Each of the programmers were provincial recreation consultants with a minimum of 10 years of recreation programming experience including full and part-time employment. As well, each recreation programmer had some type of university training either in recreation or physical education. The programmers were asked to look at the nine data booklets and according to the overall quality of the data with consideration for completeness, accuracy, usefulness, and depth, score each out of 25 points. Once again, the key informant method generally received the greatest number of points with observation second and secondary sources third. There were exceptions to this. For example, programmer #2 recorded one of the highest marks for the use of secondary sources in Devon, whereas programmer #3 recorded a very low mark for this particular set of data. A number of explanations may account for these variations: some type of bias on behalf of the programmer; changes in concentration; or the idea that certain individuals may be more impressed with certain types of information.

Summary of Results

The overall results were determined by accumulating the totals from each of the three factors. First the quantity of information was scored out of a possible 118. If multiplied by the number of communities examined using each method which in this case is three, the quantity of information for each method is based on a maximum of 354. The degree of difficulty was measured on the basis of 50 points. This allowed for a total of 150 points for each method if all three communities are included. For quality of information, each programmer

was allowed 25 points for each community or 75 points for each method. Collectively then, the grand total allotted for each method was 804 points. The scores resulting from the study were key informants--638 points, observation--463 points, secondary sources--354 points.

Chapter 6

IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The original concerns of this research, as stated in chapter one, were twofold: first, to answer the question, what facts about a community are necessary to effectively conduct recreation programs in it? and second, once these facts are known, which method of data collection, of the three selected, is most appropriate for recreation programmers? The presentation of this thesis has responded to these two concerns.

Implications and Recommendations

As a result of reviewing a great many books and articles as well as recalling personal recreation experience, the key community factors important to recreation programming were identified and formulated into a data coding booklet. This booklet will prove useful for recreation programmers and consultants as well as individuals working in other areas of the human service field. With the development of data banks, or some type of central system for storing information it is conceivable that data booklets could be prepared for each community in the province. Having this information readily available will hopefully allow recreation programmers to improve services to communities by having a greater understanding of the many facets of that community as well as minimizing preparation time for follow-up visits.

In addition, the booklet will assist program planners in other areas of human service, for it includes information on many aspects of community life. For example, during selection of the community factors to be used emphasis was not placed on information specific

to families, however completed booklets now indicate considerable data in this area. The booklet should be most useful to family life educators.

As well as identifying the community factors, the results of this research prompt a number of suggestions with regard to collecting the data: First, that a large percentage of the required information can be collected through the key informant method. This in no way suggests that this method should be used for collecting all data in all communities. Rather, it suggests that according to the data coding sheets, key informants was the method which received the highest number of points and therefore would probably provide a large amount of quality data. It may be that this particular method (as is true with the other methods), is best for collecting a certain type of data. The research assistant using this method suggested that it seemed particularly useful in picking up information on such topics as history, future directions, and community beliefs--questions which as a rule required personal interpretation and was not readily available in written form. The research assistant also found the method useful for finding out additional information not requested on the data sheets, but interesting and possibly useful. Secondly, while observation may be useful for gathering a small amount of information quickly or giving one a general feeling about a community, it is not overly useful in terms of complete, quality information. Each of the four professional recreators who examined the data to determine quality, mentioned that the data collected on the observation booklets appeared to be "guess work" and suggested a lack of reliability. Third, secondary sources are an excellent source of

demographic data and other specific community information that can be collected through census figures, community surveys or locally written books.

Generally then, several generalizations can be derived from the data collected. Specific information such as demographic details can best be collected through secondary sources. Key informants provide the best information as per quality and quantity. Observation is most useful in getting a general feeling about a community or collecting minimal amount of information quickly.

Limitations of the Study

While the study did respond to the initial concerns, one can sight a number of limitations. First, while data was analyzed for quality, quantity and degree of difficulty, it was not examined for accuracy. Second, as money and time were held constant, it was not possible to investigate ways of minimizing and/or reducing both of these. Third, little analysis was done on the pre-training given to either the researchers or the professional recreators who examined the data. Fourth, little attention was given to the presentation of self as having an effect on the research assistants ability to collect the data. Fifth and related to number four, differences in terms of the aggressiveness and assertiveness of the research assistants were not considered and in fact little consideration was given to any aspect of the research assistants or the effect it might have on the research. Sixth, there were no reliability checks. Seventh, there was no attempt made to assess the accuracy of the method for rating the degree of difficulty.

Future Directions

While this piece of research has answered the questions initially posed, it has also stimulated ideas for research refinements and areas for further study. In the research design for example, the time for data collection could be allowed to vary to determine the actual length of time necessary for collecting similar amounts and qualities of data using the three methods. In addition, the research methods could be tested on communities with smaller or larger populations to determine the method's general application.

Adaptations and refinements of the research methods could also be made and tested. For example, in order to control for differences in the observational skills of research assistants a pre-test could be utilized in order to select researchers with similar levels of skill.

Program planning research ideas which have been stimulated by this piece of research include: testing the conceptual model for program planning with particular emphasis on step one, testing the usefulness of the data bank concept in a variety of human service areas, and completing a follow up study of the utility of the data sheets in actual human service consultation.

Recreation programmers are but one specific component of the human service field which provides services to individuals and families. The research completed here addresses itself to a competency shared by many human service professionals that of needs assessment for adequate program planning.

In short, while this study has contributed to a better understanding of communities in order to provide recreation and other human service programming, it leaves considerable room for follow-up and future

research. It is hoped that this research may be made possible and that recreation programmers throughout the province may benefit in some way from the information collected.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Data Coding Booklet

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
1. Geographical Description 1. location of town in province		
2. physical size		
3. major geographical markings within town limits i.e. rivers, lakes, railroad tracks		
4. general appearance of community		
5. major geographical markings outside town limits within 20 mile radius		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
6. geology of area		
II. Population 1. present		
2. trends		
3. ethnic composition (general breakdown)		
4. age (% in each category) a) young (under 30) b) middle aged (30-55) c) older (55 and over)		
5. sex (% in each category) a) male b) female		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
6. migratory trends -How long in present community? -How long in community before that?		
7. marital status (% in each category) a) single b) married c) divorce, separated, widowed		
8. number of children (% in each category) a) none b) 1 - 2 c) 3 - 4 d) more than 4		
9. significant disabilities present in community		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
III. History 1. political history		
2. traditions, ceremonies, myths of community		
3. major issues		
4. major town achievements		
5. date of incorporation		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
IV. Economic Structure 1. major economic base		
2. major industries		
3. major employers		
4. persons holding economic power - names, positions		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
5. major occupations of community members (% in each category) a) managerial & professional b) semi-professionals c) salesworkers & clerical d) skilled manual workers e) semi-skilled workers 1961 Census categories f) unskilled laborers umemployed		
6. major income levels of community members		
7. SES patterns		
8. patterns of saving and spending of community members		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
9. economic interdependence with other communities for purchases, sales, labor, capital, employment		
10. cost of living		
11. percent of community members having two jobs		
12. number of women working (percentage)		
13. quantity of convenience items		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
V. Local Government 1. structure of the sytem -key figures & duties		
2. nature of services - departments - names and resp.		
3. relationship with regional & provincial government		
4. provincial officials living in community		
5. tax structure, budget		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
6. stability administration efficiency		
7. goals		
VI. Organizational Density 1. number of organizations and associations		
2. membership		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
VII. Housing and Property 1. type of home (percentage) -single family or multiple family		
2. ownership (percentage) - owned or - rented		
3. size of houses		
4. control of property		
5. distribution of housing development		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
VIII. Education 1. buildings - name(s) location(s), internal facilities available for each of the following a) elementary school(s)		
b) junior high school(s)		
c) senior high school(s)		
d) post secondary		
2. school age population a) number b) rate of growth		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
3. programs a) trends in subject matter and methods		
b) special programs		
c) emphasis on physical education		
4. teachers a) teaching techniques		
b) education levels		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
c) philosophy of education		
5. community a) relationship between school and community		
b) parent-school associations		
c) education levels of parents		
d) non-school sources of learning		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
6. transportation a) degree of bussing		
b) length of bus routes		
7. control a) elected and appointed officials		
IX. Recreation and Leisure 1. facilities - rink golf course swimming pool (indoor, outdoor) senior citizen rec. center other		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
2. programs		
3. types of activities engaged in		
4. number of hours work per week		
5. number hours leisure time per day		
6. vacation time per year		
7. length of journey to work		
8. holiday homes		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
i. distance will travel to leisure activities		
j. back yard		
k. recreation linkages with other communities		
l. influence of outside public & private agencies on recreation		
m. professionalism vs. amateurism		
n. natural and man-made facilities		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
X. Health a. access to professionals (i) doctors		
(ii) dentists		
(iii) social workers		
b. access to facilities (i) drug stores		
(ii) hospitals		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
(iii) nursing home		
(iv) senior citizen residential facilities		
(v) sources of health information		
c. plans for future construction		
XI. Religion a. role of religion in community		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
b. extent & form of participation		
c. names & sizes of congregations & leaders		
d. trends		
e. major activities in community life		
XII. Other Services a. law enforcement		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
b. libraries		
c. service stations		
d. banks		
e. shopping facilities		
f. water		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
g. sewer		
h. electricity		
i. fire		
j. theatres		
k. bowling alley		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
1. grain elevators		
XIII. Communications a. literacy rates (percentages)		
b. media services (i) television channels		
(ii) radio stations		
(iii) newspapers		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
c. households with telephones (percentages)		
d. (i) households with televisions (percentages)		
(ii) households with more than one television (percentages)		
e. mobility (i) intra urban transportation (within town)		
(ii). Inter urban transportation (between towns)		

FACTOR UNDER STUDY	INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
(iii) road systems		
(iv) households with a vehicle		
(v) households with more than one vehicle		
f. neighborliness and community spirit		
XIV. other observations or information not previously recorded		

Appendix B: Time Table and Instructions

to Research Assistants

June 29, 1978

Research Assistants:

You are about to participate in some research which is aimed at devising an approach to studying communities. The purpose is to look at three methods of obtaining information about communities that will be useful in planning recreation programs. The methods to be looked at are observation, secondary sources, and key informants. Each research assistant will be assigned one research method that will be used to gather information in three separate communities. Your schedule will be as follows:

Wednesday, July 5	9:00 - 12:00	Orientation (Family Studies Conference Room) Make appointments if necessary
Thursday, July 6	9:00 - 12:00	Pre-test Redwater
	1:30 - 3:30	Meeting to discuss changes (Family Studies Conference Room)
Monday, July 10	9:00 - 12:00	Morinville
Tuesday, July 11	9:00 - 12:00	Stony Plain
Wednesday, July 12	9:00 - 12:00	Devon
	1:00 - 3:00	Report Back (Family Studies Conference Room) Key Informant R.A.
	3:00 - 5:00	Report Back Secondary Sources R.A.
Thursday, July 13	8:30 - 10:30 a.m.	Report Back Observation R.A.

Norma-Jean Heine

OBSERVATION

What? Observation is the most basic method of getting information about the world around us. It simply involves walking or driving around a community, looking at things. If you wish, you may engage in informal discussions with people, however, do not read any documents i.e. newspapers, records, etc., nor engage in formal interviewing.

Why? The purpose of this study is to "observe" in each community in order to gain the necessary information for the attached survey sheet.

How? Upon visiting each community, collect as much information as you can by observing and record the data as accurately as possible including the source of the information. If you do any work prior to the community visit in order to make information recording sheets etc., record it including the amount of time spent.

Remember:

This is not a competition. Only the technique is being evaluated, not the researcher. Please do not speak to your fellow research assitants from 9:00 a.m. July 10 until 12:00 noon July 12.

SECONDARY SOURCES

What? Use of secondary sources involves the systematic examination of documents i.e. novels, poems, government publications, songs, editorials, speeches, debates, newspapers, sermons, historical papers, records, maps, photographs, personal histories, letters, diaries, phone books, census records, registration data, school reports and records, etc. for the purpose of extracting information.

Why? The purpose of this study is to examine a number of documents in order to gather the necessary information for the attached survey sheet.

How? Prepare a list of the documents you would like to examine in each community. Consider where the documents would be located and make appointments for viewing if necessary. Record any effort you make on the project prior to the actual visit including the amount of time spent. Upon visiting the community, gather as much data as you can using your assigned research method only. Record the data as accurately as possible including the source of the information.

Remember:

This is not a competition. Only the technique is being evaluated, not the researcher. Please do not speak to your fellow research assistants from 9:00 a.m. July 10 until 12:00 noon July 12.

KEY INFORMANTS

What? Key Informants is a research process whereby "key" community people are selected for interview purposes. Bridgeland and Sofranko (1975) suggested that key informants should be individuals in the community who can assess community problems, have a broad perspective on major issues, and are in positions of effecting, implementing or inforcing decisions. Examples of key informants are mayors, members of town council, public health officials, school principals, local businessmen, P.S.S. directors, Recreation Directors, members of the Recreation Board, etc.

Why? The purpose for this study is to meet with a number of key informants in order to gather the necessary information for the attached survey sheet.

How? Select a number of key informants for each community and make appointments to meet with them on the suggested date. Record any effort you make on the project prior to the actual visit including the amount of time spent. Interview each informant and record the data as accurately as possible including the source of the information. Use only the research method assigned to you to collect your data.

Remember:

This is not a competition. Only the technique is being evaluated, not the researcher. Please do not speak to your fellow research assistants from 9:00 a.m. July 10 until 12:00 noon July 12.